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ABSTRACT

A case study examined purpose in the writing of four college freshmen enrolled in a basic composition course. Discourse based interviews were conducted with the subjects before and after they responded to each of three writing tasks designed to provide them with different choices for audience, mode, and focus. The data revealed two central ways in which students conceptualize the purposes for their writing. They are either class-directed in the development of purpose, or rhetorically flexible--able to accommodate their writing to different kinds of tasks with different topics and audiences. The results suggest that, in contrast to the predictions of current functional discourse taxonomies, these conceptualizations are more apt to grow out of the students' models of writing and literacy than the specific features of the tasks to which they are responding. The results support a writing pedagogy in which a qualitative reformulation of students' discourse modes is more central to their continued learning than the quantitative acquisition or mastery of discourse-specific skills. (HTH)

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COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATIVE INTENTION: EXPLORING THE DIMENSIONS OF PURPOSE IN COLLEGE WRITING

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Abstract

In spite of its obvious centrality in written discourse, the concept of "purpose" has remained illusive, ill-defined, and unexplored in composition research. Recent studies of writing have focused more sharply on the actual processes of composing than on features of the rhetorical situation surrounding the composing event--features in many ways determined by the writer's purpose for producing the discourse. Without recourse to the writer's conception of purpose, our scrutiny of composing processes offers us little insight into the deeper levels of cognition and affect underlying the act of writing.

The following pages describe and report the results of a case study of purpose in the writing of four college freshmen enrolled in a basic composition course at Indiana University. Discourse-based interviews were conducted with the participants before and after they responded to each of three tasks designed to provide them with different choices for audience, mode, and focus. Analyzed descriptively, the data reveal two central ways in which students conceptualize the purposes for their writing. In contrast to the predictions of current functional discourse taxonomies, these conceptualizations are more apt to grow out of the students' models of writing and literacy than the specific features of the tasks to which they are responding. The results support a writing pedagogy in which a qualitative reformulation of students' discourse models is more central to their continued learning than the quantitative acquisition or mastery of discourse-specific skills.

Composition and Communicative Intention: Exploring the Dimensions of Purpose in College Writing

Chris M. Anson

Writing as a Purposeful Activity

For all its recent scrutiny of writing processes and behaviors, composition research has generally ignored the social and contextual dimensions of writing (Humes, 1983). Until recently, it has not been very important to the researcher what context the writer is in when composing; what consequences the writer anticipates his or her writing will have; whether the incentive for writing comes from the writer being studied or from the investigator; or what reason the writer has for writing.

The last of these considerations--the writer's "purpose" or "aim"--is one of the most frequently mentioned but least explored and understood aspects of writing. For several years, composition theorists have lamented the lack of substantive research in this area, especially as it relates to unskilled writer's developing awareness of language structure and function. Odell (1979), for example, raises a number of important questions that bear on discourse theorists' assertions about the important of purpose in the composing process: do writers justify their choices by referring to their basic purpose in writing? What proportion of our students are unable to articulate reasons for their choices? Are there some kinds of tasks in which purpose seems a more important consideration than it does in other kinds of tasks? These and related questions suggest a need to explore the way writers' conceptions of purpose relate to the textual and linguistic features of their writing.

Purpose also has significance for the study of writing instruction. As theoretical advances bring about curricular innovations, teachers must continue to question how their pedagogical goals relate to the writing they have their students do, and the uses to which this writing is put. How important is it to provide students with opportunities to write for reasons other than those traditionally established in the classroom? Should such writing be assessed or responded to differently than writing directed to the teacher or other class members? Should teachers compel students to define their own purposes, or should these purposes be implicit in the design of the task?

To study the nature and function of purpose in students' writing, I conducted intensive case-analyses of four freshman writers enrolled in a basic-skills composition course at Indiana University in the spring of 1984. To learn how these students' writing processes related to their conceptions of purpose, I studied in detail approximately 22 hours of transcriptions from taped "discourse-based interviews" (see Odell, Goswami & Herrington, 1983) designed to explore not only the larger rhetorical dimensions of the writers' purposes but also the specific operational purposes embodied in their rhetorical and linguistic decisions (see Knoblauch, 1982). Throughout this analysis was the underlying assumption that retrospective reports of students' writing processes would reveal patterns in the way they conceived of their purpose for writing and the way these purposes guided the production of discourse within the academic context; that is, in spite of the cognitive limitations of retrospective reports,

such reports reveal the writer's larger conceptions of writing--what is is, what one should know about it, and how one should go about doing it (see Tomlinson, 1984). In this respect, the study was designed to uncover several "levels" of purpose in the writing of college freshmen.

As a rhetorical or processual concept, "purpose" is extremely complex in spite of the overt simplicity with which it has been treated. Before describing the central questions which this study addressed and the results of the data gathered, it will be worthwhile to consider briefly some of the perspectives from which the concept of purpose in written discourse can be viewed. Because much research in writing is "pre-theoretical" or "pre-paradigmatic" (Emig, 1981), these perspectives may be said to constitute all that we have of a "model" of purpose in the writing process.

Three Dimensions of Purpose in College Writing

In the context of the college writing course, students' purposes may be analyzed within three overlapping dimensions: rhetorical, educational, and psychological. Current rhetorical theories of writing generally adhere to a "text-based" model of discourse in which specific features of the text itself are sufficient to indicate the writer's underlying "dominant" purpose or aim. In the taxonomies of Britton (1975) and Kinneavy (1971), for example, writers are thought to compose "transactionally" or "expressively," "poetically" or "extensively," and these aims are said to be recognizable in features of the text that is produced. But while such taxonomies have helped to move us beyond the

rigid confines of the nineteenth-century "modes" of discourse, they remain unable to account for the particular purposes brought to the text by the writer and reader--a point well supported in recent theories of reading and interpretation (see Fish, 1980; Rosenblatt, 1978; Smith, 1978). Furthermore, text-based rhetorical theories do not account for the role of context in the production or interpretation of written discourse, relying instead on broad functional categories established a priori to the analysis of particular texts.

As many rhetoricians have argued, analysis of writers' purposes demands knowledge of the rhetorical situation in which the text is produced (see, for example, Bitzer, 1968, 1980; Hymes, 1964). Unfortunately, the educational context includes an additional set of rhetorical dimensions in the system of social roles, purposes, and assumptions of its participants. Consequently, the study of purpose in college composition must also include the study of classroom organization and teacher decision-making which, in the words of Clark and Florio (1983), "highlight the classroom as a special place that both constitutes a small community in its own right and is linked in important ways to the larger socio-cultural milieu."

Within any particular classroom, therefore, purpose must be partly defined by the teacher's specific instructional objectives--objectives often influenced by more general institutional, curricular, political or cultural goals upon which they act. While one teacher may structure the class around the theme of "exploring the inner self," another may be

having the students parse sentences or hunt for commas faults in dittoed hand-outs. These differences in instructional emphasis and organization usually affect the students' attitudes toward and production of the writing they do in the classroom, adding another dimension to the purposes underlying their composing processes.

Finally, purpose must be defined by the psychological dimensions at the core of the composing process--processes that motivate planning, reading and rescanning, assessing, predicting, and revising. The model of these dimensions which we have inherited urges that writing is mysterious and nonrational, the result, in Steinberg's words, of "inviting the muse rather than of employing consciously an ordered, rational process" (1980, p. 156).

Central to the role of purpose in the psychology of writing are the contributions of tacit and metalinguistic knowledge. A great deal of what people do when they speak or write happens without much conscious awareness--a kind of knowledge Polanyi (1966) had called tacit. Working in partnership with focal knowledge, or knowledge we are aware of attending to, tacit decisions often have their origins in the purposeful situations surrounding the writing event: clearing up a misunderstanding, requesting payment of a bill, making a work of art, completing an assignment. These goals make up the writer's "global purposes," what they intend the discourse to do. "Focal purposes," on the other hand, are those bits and pieces of the discourse essential to the execution of global purposes (Smith, 1982). We measure

focal decisions against our global purposes, constantly modifying the former as they give rise to and fulfill the latter.

The psychological dimensions of purpose, therefore, include the relative contributions of tacit and metalinguistic knowledge. More specifically, the psychology of writing in the classroom involves a special kind of cognition, since the rhetorical "situation" of the writing often mirrors that of other contexts but adds to them the purpose of learning, of manipulating tacit and meta-cognitive forms of knowing.

The context of the writing class, with its complex network of individual, social, pedagogical, and cultural goals, allows for the development of simultaneous purposes both within and beyond the text produced. When given the task to write a letter to someone beyond the classroom, explaining to them a problem in the community and perhaps suggesting some solutions, students do not write simply "transactionally" or "expressively." Instead, countless other purposes may enter into both the tacit and conscious thinking processes of the writer--purposes to deal with a personal problem, perhaps so deeply that these purposes are not part of the text's surface features; to follow the teacher's agenda; to demonstrate the acquisition of certain skills in the course; to portray the writer as a good person worthy of praise; to understand some difficult or new idea; to actually deal with the problem--that is, to send the letter out in the hope that it will cause action; and simply to do what is expected. These interweaving purposes shape the production of the text, guiding linguistic, rhetorical, stylistic, and formal choices. Further-

more, texts with all the ostensible surface features of "argumentative letters" or "expository five-paragraph themes" often embody complicated personal intentions not "imputed" in the text itself--that is, unrecoverable. By thinking of students' purposes according to very general taxonomies of aim, then, we turn a blind eye to the rich and complicated intentions at the heart of the composing event. While these intentions may be only partly relevant to the rhetorical effects of a discourse upon its intended audience, they are fundamental to our understanding of how students produce written texts in the educational context.

Uncovering Students' Purposes for Writing: A Case Study

Collection of Data

Traditional empirical research methodologies are particularly unsuitable for studying writers' purposes because the act of controlling variables or manipulating instructional contexts changes the very nature of the participants' purposes, especially when they are aware of the controls. Consequently, the present study was designed to preserve as much as possible the ecological validity of the classroom, making use of a pyramidal research design to provide the maximum descriptive power with the least instrusion upon the natural context (see Graves, 1981).

In conformity to a naturalistic research paradigm, the questions addressed in this study were not framed as hypotheses to be tested empirically. Instead, five questions were posed to provide the study with descriptive focus:

1. When given writing tasks that involve real audiences and purposes beyond the classroom, how do students develop and discuss their purposes? To what extent are these purposes and audiences "real" to the students, and how do they affect what the students say and do in their writing?

2. How do students talk about their revisions in this writing, and what is the contribution of purpose to the changes they make?

3. How are students' conceptions of audience related to their conceptions of purpose? How are reader-based decisions--e.g., portrayal of the self--related to their conceptions of audience and purpose?

4. Are there differences in the way that students develop purposes for tasks with different rhetorical parameters?

5. What is the relationship between the way that students discuss their purposes in their writing and their general attitudes toward writing, their models of writing, and their histories as writers?

Four students (two from each of two sections of basic composition) were selected, on the basis of writing profiles, to participate in the study. Profiles were obtained in two ways: first, from an initial out-of-class writing assignment given on the first day of the course; second, from a "writing inventory," a detailed questionnaire designed to elicit attitudes, beliefs, experiences, and ideas concerning written communication and the writing process (see Burke, 1981; Kucer, 1983). Participants were chosen for variety in several categories: ethnicity, socio-economic background, sex, writing ability, experiences as writers, and attitudes toward literacy.

An initial interview was conducted with each participant to discuss his or her response to the writing inventory. Participants then responded to three writing assignments that were part

of the regular course syllabus. Before composing rough drafts of each text, the participants were given a day or two to think about and, optionally, plan our their response (mentally or on paper). They then discussed this planning with me in private conference. All discussions were taped. After writing both a rough and a revised draft in response to the assignment, each participant then met with me a second time to discuss the two drafts. These second meetings conformed to the "discourse-based interview" procedure (Odell & Goswami, 1982; Odell, Goswami & Herrington, 1983). Interviews focused generally on the students' conceptions of their purpose for writing, and specifically on their reasons for making some of the changes reflected in the two drafts.

In presenting the participants with specific, more or less "guided" assignments, I hoped to learn something about the range of their expressed purposes, and the extent to which the tasks "substituted" in the students' writing experiences for natural, self-sponsored writing events. The three tasks were designed to be directive or non-directive in terms of audience, nature of the "topic" or "focus," and the possible form of the response. In order to enrich the data and allow comparisons of the ways that the students interpreted the generalized assignments and developed specific purposes for them, I varied the tasks along one or more of these parameters. The first assignment, for example, specified the domain of the topic and the form of the response, and restricted the choice of audience to one or more unknown readers. The second assignment specified the domain of

the topic and the nature of the reader, but provided more freedom for the form of response. The third assignment specified only the domain of the topic. Varying the tasks in this way allowed for some post-study discussion with the participants about their preference for one or another assignment. The three tasks were also designed to constrain neither the range of possible rhetorical purposes nor the range of operational purposes in the responses.

Texts in response to these three assignments were collected from all the class members who completed them (approximately 35) and were analyzed descriptively for features such as specificity of the audience, contextual ties to the classroom, nature of the subject matter, kinds of revisions made between the two drafts, and the ways in which the students seemed to have interpreted the assignments and developed purposes from them. This descriptive summary of the texts established a context for examining the texts of and interviews with the four case-study participants.

Results

In moving among levels of data, from the analysis of class texts and participants' texts to the transcriptions of the discourse-based interviews and discussions of the writing inventory, two very general tendencies emerged which eventually solidified into fuller pictures of the four case-study students as types of writers. More than any other factor, these typological tendencies seemed to account for the way that the writers developed purposes for their writing, they way they discussed their writing and revising, and the way they conceived

of themselves, rhetorically, in relation to their intended audiences. Reciprocally, further interview data then confirmed parts of these general typologies and allowed other parts to be modified.

The first type of writer is primarily class-directed in the development of his or her purposes. Class-directed writers usually write for the purpose of completing the assignment. Their texts tend to include references to the assignment or the class, and when they are asked to write to readers beyond the classroom, their responses are often artificial, written to vaguely defined or surrogate readers. The class-directed writer finds it difficult to develop purposes for writing that are free from the impositions of the curriculum. Consequently, they take few risks; they write short texts without much rhetorical or stylistic experimentation. Typical class-directed writers seem to view writing as a demonstration of competence, of what they have learned or what they know, not as a way to learn or to know. In more personal writing, class-directed writers often try to portray themselves as decent, mature people, this for the benefit of enhancing their "performance" in the eyes of their teacher. They are also concerned with "what the teacher wants," often asking for clarification of an assignment or hints as to how they should respond to it, what is the "correct way." Class-directed writers are performance-oriented, rhetorically limited, and mechanistic in their composing processes.

The second type of writer is rhetorically flexible. Rhetorically flexible writers are able to accommodate their

writing to different kinds of tasks with different topics and audiences--in fact, they seem eager to do so. In writing to non-classroom audiences, they sometimes play roles effectively, so that the resulting text shares all the characteristics we might find in actual texts written in the extracurricular context. The classroom seems to drop away from the thinking of writers in this group, and they seem to enjoy a kind of rhetorical gaming, using different registers for different purposes. Because rhetorically flexible writers do not compose mechanistically, instead moving constantly between their global and operational purposes, their drafts show more extensive revisions, and they talk about these revisions by referring to many features of the composing situation, such as their imagined and actual readers, their projection of an image as writer, and so on. Rhetorically flexible writers also have less trouble producing context-specific responses to assignments designed only for classroom purposes. Writers in this group also seem more willing to experiment with their purposes, perhaps defining an assignment idiosyncratically, without worrying about the teacher's expectations.

These typologies are, of course, idealized sets of characteristics, and no single student will ever represent them fully, especially when we consider that students are in a continuous state of intellectual growth and change. Nonetheless, they are useful indicators of the dominant purposes that appear to guide many students' writing in the classroom. Turning to the results of two case-study participants, we can begin to see how various aspects of these idealized constructs work their way into

the students' purposes.

Mindy

Mindy's writing and the way she talked about it suggests that her purposes were primarily class-directed and learning-sterile. Throughout our interviews, it was apparent that she wished to do what was expected of her, to demonstrate competence and follow the teacher's agenda. Her consistent focus on the traditional concerns of the composition course--the organization of her ideas, the choice of the "right word," the avoidance of grammatical errors--dominated much of what she said about what she was trying to accomplish in her writing. Consequently, other aspects of the rhetorical situation in her writing did not seem to concern her much because she thought them peripheral to the main purpose of classroom discourse--to "get the point across" and "not look dumb." Our discussions, however, showed that other concerns such as audience could exist in Mindy's thinking, but she preferred not to attend to them. She devoted her attention to what she thought was important in the academic context, and this was strong enough to push into the background other matters relating to the surrounding imagined context of her writing.

Perhaps because of her attempt to respond "as expected," Mindy's planning for her writing typically involved thinking about the assignment and then choosing what she called "the easiest way out"--the simplest treatment possible of the assignment. This "criterion of simplicity" (which usually helped her to make an outline almost immediately after choosing the topic) is evidenced in her planning for the first assignment; she

decided to write about some broken showers in her dormitory because other problems in her home town (45 miles away) were too distant from her immediate experience. Mindy's criterion of simplicity also influenced her choice of topic and mode of discourse in the third assignment, in which she wrote yet another letter because "essays are a lot harder to write; everything has to be really good and really proper, and when you write a letter you can be more casual; it's just a lot easier to write."

Perhaps because she is so preoccupied with "doing her essay right," Mindy does not see much value in considering her reader. She tries instead to develop her organization and produce clear, readable prose. In the first assignment, for example, she has some difficulty characterizing her reader; he is "probably the person who's the head of maintenance or something . . . somebody to take care of [the problem] or fix it, or tell somebody to fix it." Probed further, she describes this person as "probably some middle-aged guy who's real . . . I can picture him in this real dingy T-shirt and blue jeans, and with one of them little belts on." She seems unable to know in advance who her reader will be, and thus she sees no reason to accommodate her linguistic and rhetorical choices to different conceptions of her audience:

> M: Watch him [the recipient] turn out to wear a suit or something . . . .
>
> I: Do you feel you'd make different choices about what to put in the letter [for the janitor or the "administrator"]?
>
> M: Probably it would be about the same, because if I was writing to the guy in the suit, I'd want him to hear all my gripes and stuff, because if I just told him what the problem was, probably . . . I don't know. I guess you

gotta tell him what's wrong with it. And the guy--the janitor--you'd have to tell him the same thing.

Part of Mindy's difficulty predicting the effect her choices will have on different readers thus originates in her lack of knowledge about the specific context in which her response will be read. Since this context is finally unimportant to her, there is no point in adapting the language of the text to realize her purpose. Interestingly, Mindy is aware that her writing might have a different effect on a janitor or an administrator, but this awareness does not play a role in her writing because the letter serves no purpose beyond the classroom:

I: Are you going to send this?

M: Oh, no! [Laughs.] It sounds too goofy.

I: Well, maybe you'll think about sending it to the person.

M: By the time it's done it'll probably . . . someone's probably already said something. Because we've been griping about it all week. I'm doing this for the class, really. I'm just trying to find something that I think is a problem, something that's close to me yet's not too distant that I can't write about it.

I: Do you suppose you're going to try to find the guy's name or his position to do the letter?

M: Oh, no, because I'm not sending it.

I: You'll just put "Dear Blank"?

M: Oh, I'll find a name for that. Because I could probably just ask one of the ladies . . . our maid or something.

In her final draft, Mindy decides to make up the name "Mr. Miller" for her salutation. Likewise, her choice of a recipient for her letter in the second assignment is arbitrary, tagged on for the purpose of the task:

I: What about this here, choose someone you know

personally?

M: I was going to write, um, I don't know, really . . . I was going to write to a neighbor or something.

I: You haven't decided specifically, then?

M: I could almost pick anybody; it really wouldn't matter. I could just pick my grandma, it wouldn't matter to me.

I: Doesn't matter whether you'd choose your neighbor or your grandmother?

M: Not really. Maybe like examples, I might choose different examples.

Unlike the awareness displayed by writers in other research studies who intend their texts to reach their audiences (see Odell, Goswami & Quirk, 1983)--or are able to consider the rhetorical dimensions of their writing as if it would reach such audiences--Mindy's purposes do not help her make decisions in her writing. Because she does not care who reads her letter, or why, she discusses her grandmother as possible recipient of her letter in the abstract, perhaps from a learned response to an academic value placed on "audience awareness."

One of the more important probes of the students' purposes involved discussing with them the reasons for their revisions. Not surprisingly, Mindy had difficulty explaining many of her mostly word- and phrase-level revisions, particularly in the first and second assignments. Over half her explanations referred to the "sound" of the words and phrases she revises, rather than to her purpose in writing or the specific effects her choices might have in realizing her intentions. Often she referred to rule-book criteria, as when she added a sentence in her revision of the first assignment because "you should always

have a way to solve [the problem]" or when, in writing to her aunt in response to the second assignment, she included a footnote for some information in order to "give credit like you're supposed to."

Throughout the many hours I spent discussing Mindy's writing with her, I found a student who, because of her class-directedness, was for the most part unable to exploit the forms of knowledge that help writers to produce effective texts with effective results on their readers. Instead, she tried to draw from her "textbook" knowledge of writing, knowledge rather ironically unable to help her in her composing process. This process, then, lacked what we might call "self-enrichment"; because her purpose was most often extrinsic, based on a construct of instructional expectations, her guesses about what was effective and ineffective in her writing could not be guided by more useful rhetorical concerns. She did not learn <u>about</u> writing in the process of doing it.

<u>Jeremy</u>

In contrast to Mindy, Jeremy represented a writer for whom every experience with written discourse is unique and learning-rich. Growing from a high level of metalinguistic awareness, Jeremy's "independence" within his classroom context showed in the way that he tried to "teach" me about his use of language, his linguistic and rhetorical choices, and his understanding of the world of discourse.

The results of my interviews with Jeremy suggest that he

defines writing broadly and has integrated it fully into his life. In fact, as Emig (1971) also observed in her study of Lynn, a twelfth-grade student, Jeremy seemed to know more about the process of composing than many of his past teachers, judging from his descriptions of their instructional methods. He felt that he had learned more about writing from practicing it on his own than by writing in the classroom, this in spite of the predominance of academic writing in his experience. Much of his "material," as he called it, he had collected in a series of notebooks extending as far back as the third grade.

Jeremy's purposes in most of his writing were at once both reader- and writer-centered, serving at times to entertain or amuse an imagined reader and at other times to engage Jeremy himself in his own comedic explorations. He liked to write about "bizarre situations," and was preoccupied with being funny or satirical. But because the academic context did not often allow him to explore this aspect of his writing, he made use of a unique strategy enabling him to fulfill both his intrinsic and extrinsic purposes in the same texts. In his response to the second assignment, for example, he wrote a mock movie-review intended to criticize Richard Schickel's "confusing" and "badly written" reviews in Time magazine. In this mock review, Jeremy entertained himself by turning the names of the movie's characters into puns on popular songs and sayings. He did not intend these puns, however, to stand on the surface of his text's meaning; they existed primarily for his own amusement:

J: [Explains some of the puns.]

I: Oh, I didn't get that.

J: Yeah, you weren't supposed to . . . .

I: So then, how are those things a spoof on Richard Shickel's movie reviews?

J: It really isn't a spoof . . . but it's still a confusing paragraph. Like I had to point out to you what those were.

I: Do you think most readers would get all these jokes?

J: Nope. But that isn't the . . . I don't care if they don't get it.

I: What was the point, then? If they don't get the jokes, then . . . ?

J: Besides my having fun with it? Like I said, I can get all those out of it myself, but the idea that's present, is that it's confusing, so even if they don't get the jokes, it's confusing as it is.

I: Will it still be confusing if they get the jokes?

J: Yeah, it'll just be funnier. I mean, I go on through the whole paragraph talking about names, and what each guy plays, but I never really tell what he [Shickel] thinks of the movie until the last sentence.

How much of Jeremy's "intrinsic purposes" entered into his academic writing depended much more on what he envisioned for it than from any particular features of the task design, such as its "instructional purpose." In the first assignment, for example, Jeremy decided that a sarcastic or witty response was less appropriate than a letter expressing a certain amount of "contolled anger." In justifying this and many other choices of purpose, however, Jeremy rarely referred to the educational dimensions of his writing, choosing instead to let the rhetorical context of the writing itself guide his composing process. In this respect, students like Jeremy differ from students like Mindy in the

extent to which they control their texts, asking themselves appropriate questions about their writing instead of relying on academic pronouncements about whether they have produced their texts "correctly" (see Odell, Goswami & Quirk, 1983).

My analysis of Jeremy's more specific composing behaviors uncovered aspects of his purposes that related simultaneously to the educational, rhetorical, and psychological dimensions of purpose discussed earlier. He made linguistic choices between his drafts for a variety of reasons--anticipating his imagined reader's responses; attempting to amuse himself or "beef up" his writing for his own pleasure; feeling that his teacher might be more impressed with his writing if he used a more descriptive word or phrase; projecting a "clever, mature" image and avoiding looking like a naive college freshman; making sure that he did not deviate too much from the expectations of the task itself. In trying to unravel these various aspects of his purposes, I found myself relying on Jeremy's conscious knowledge of his own composing processes, which he was able to talk about candidly and coherently. What we see in Jeremy, then, is a metacognitively mature writer who has already considered many facets of his own writing and the uses it serves in his life. The important difference between writers like Jeremy and writers like Mindy lies in their models of writing rather than in the quality of writing per se, and in their experiences writing for different purposes in different contexts. Jeremy's model we might call learning-rich; regardless how much or how little such a writer gets from a single, one-semester writing course, he or she will carry this

learning-rich model of writing beyond the course, continuing to grow from further experiences in written communication. Learning-sterile writers, on the other hand, may improve their grammatical control, their sense of paragraph organization, or their knowledge of various discourse conventions in one semester, but beyond the writing course they will continue to rely on an authority figure who can make their decisions for them, usually in the form of requirements imposed on the texts they produce. This suggests that to foster the writing abilities of both kinds of students, we cannot impose on them rigidly defined educational purposes and audiences from above; we must instead create contexts in which such purpose and audiences, and how discourse features relate to these, are questioned and manipulated from within. We must pay more attention, in other words, to what our courses are doing to the way students think about writing, not only to the way the go about doing it.

Implications

Naturalistic inquiry is especially useful in revealing areas of research needing continued exploration. The richness of the data gathered in the present study suggest that students inter- and intra-textual purposes are strongly related to their models of writing--to the way they have integrated written discourse into their lives. At one extreme, my discussions with Mindy show a student for whom writing has little or no importance, perhaps because so little in her life has encouraged her to write for any intrinsic purpose. Writing remains for students like Mindy a purely scholastic exercise. At the other extreme, Jeremy has

made writing so much a part of his life that he scarcely needs an academic context in which to do it. We might expect such an attitude in someone who plans to make writing a central activity of his or her career; yet Jeremy does not; he simply recognizes the centrality of written discourse in the lives of thinking, literate individuals. These different attitudes toward writing and its uses are perhaps the most important determinant of the way the students respond to writing tasks and talk about what they are doing and why.

Providing an environment that encourages students to leave behind their learning-sterile, dualistic models of writing is not easily accomplished. If we are to build purpose-oriented writing curricula, however, we must begin to accord a higher priority to several important principles of instructinal design.

First, we need to encourage the enrichment of students' writing models. Although many students like Mindy have learned to perform satisfactorily in most writing situations, they do so reluctantly and with difficulty. For these students, the writing process is a process of doing, not learning; of showing competence or getting a task done, not of exploring their ideas or discovering new possibilities in their use of language. Writing instruction, therefore, must deal openly with students' discourse models, encouraging them to write and talk about the place of writing in their lives. This kind of meta-focus will not help all students with a dualistic view of knowledge to think of writing more contextually and relativistically (see Perry, 1970), but enough discussion of writing may help many young

writers to break the bonds of their performance-based models of academic writing. At the same time, teachers must be sensitive to the way their own instruction reinforces particular models of writing.

We must also encourage students to take risks, and we must provide contexts rich in feedback, particularly in terms of the students' own expressed purposes. Finally, it is essential to give students the opportunity to write for a variety of discourse purposes to a variety of audiences; limiting them to artificial practice essays--what Britton calls "dummy runs" (1975)--only stagnates students in a performance-based context without the chance to explore the purposes at the heart of all writing events.

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